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Contact: Carol Guthrie
(202) 224-4515

**41 SENATORS BLOCK CHECKS FOR SENIORS, DISABLED VETS,
DENY BENEFITS TO AMERICANS LOOKING FOR WORK**

20 million American seniors, 250,000 disabled veterans were to receive \$500 checks
as part of Finance Committee economic stimulus plan;
votes against Baucus bill leaves door open to rebates for illegal immigrants as well

Washington, DC – Forty-one United States Senators today voted to deny \$500 economic stimulus checks to 20 million American seniors living on Social Security and to 250,000 disabled American veterans. Senators voted at 5:45 today on a package of economic stimulus measures advanced by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and the Finance panel. The legislation would have included millions more low-income Americans in a tax rebate plan to spur consumer spending, would have provided tax relief to businesses losing money in the economic downturn, and included new efforts to help poor families pay their heating bills. The close vote against the Baucus measure blocked the help for low-income Americans and struggling businesses – all left out of a House-passed stimulus bill – and left open the possibility of tax rebates for illegal immigrants as extra safeguards in the Finance package fell away.

“Twenty million seniors and 250,000 of our disabled veterans were asking the Senate to let them play a role in reviving our economy. It’s hard to believe that so many Senators could turn a deaf ear to these good Americans,” said Baucus. **“Why on earth would we not move money into the hands of Americans who need it and who would inject it straight into our sick economy? There was a chance on the table to help low-income seniors and disabled veterans and Americans looking for work, and the Senate frankly blew it tonight.”**

The Finance Committee last week approved a Baucus proposal to boost the American economy with \$500 rebates for every American reporting \$3000 in wages, Social Security income, or net self-employment income on a 2007 tax return, with more for married couples and families with children. Disabled veterans who would not otherwise qualify could receive rebates, too. The Baucus legislation also extended Federal unemployment insurance benefits for 13 weeks in all states through December 2008, and provided an additional 13 weeks of benefits in states meeting certain criteria for high unemployment. Additional business tax relief allowed companies losing money in the economic downturn to access quick cash for payroll and expenses. Safeguards in the bill required tax filers to report valid Social Security numbers – which cannot be held by persons in the country illegally – to be eligible for any rebate, including the \$300 per child check.

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The vote against that package, to which Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had added help for low-income families to pay heating bills and for the sagging housing sector, leaves Congress considering a House-passed economic plan with lower rebates for many Americans, no help for seniors living on Social Security or for many disabled veterans, no extended unemployment insurance, no tax relief for businesses reporting financial losses, no heating assistance, and no safeguards to keep the rebate from going to persons in the country illegally.

“Seniors and veterans and all Americans have reason to be disappointed this evening, and I’m disappointed right alongside them. Making these good changes tonight would not have slowed the stimulus plan in any way, but it would certainly have improved it,” said Baucus. **“I’ll fight at every opportunity for Congress to do better by these folks in the future.”**

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